

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Case File No.: AA-81872

EA No.: AK-040-99-036

Type of Action: Right-of-Way for driveway in Eagle River

Location: W½SE¼SW¼, Sec. 14, T. 14 N., R. 1 W., Seward Meridian, Alaska

Applicant: Mr. William Crouse

Prepared By: Shirley Rackley, Realty Specialist

Preparing Office: Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office
6881 Abbott Loop Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Date Prepared: January 18, 2000

I. INTRODUCTION

Mr. William Crouse of Eagle River applied for a road right-of-way (R/W) on May 20, 1999. This R/W would provide access to his private property through Federal lands.

The road was built by the military in the early 1950's for recreation and training purposes and has been used in its original condition in excess of 50 years.

The land is State selected but not yet conveyed. Mr. Crouse has been given a letter of non-objection for his use of the road by the Mental Health Trust Office.

One of the original owners of the Crouse property was given a permit from the State to use the road. Each successive owner has assumed the State permit was valid.

Mr. Crouse approached BLM before buying the property and was told that the State permit was legal and he need not worry about access. After he purchased the property he realized that the State permit does not provide legal access to his property.

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

Mr. Crouse owns 100 acres of land that can only be accessed by using an existing road. The road crosses both Federal and private land. Mr. Crouse is requesting the right to use the portions of the road that is federally owned. If the R/W is approved, he plans to build a home on his property.

B. Conformance with the Land Use Plan:

The subject lands are included in the Alaska Southcentral Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP), March 1980. Activity Objective L-2 of the MFP states that BLM will "satisfy needs for rights-of-way".

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

The subject lands have been selected by the State of Alaska pursuant to the Alaska Statehood Act. The Mental Health Trust Office is the administering office for the subject lands. The BLM may issue R/Ws on State selected land, but written concurrence from the Mental Health Trust Office is necessary.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

A. Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is to continue use and maintenance of an existing access road located in the W¹/₂SE¹/₄SW¹/₄, Section 14, T. 14 N., R. 1 W., Seward Meridian.

The access road is 4,600 feet long and 30 feet wide. Twenty-six hundred feet of the road is located on public land under the jurisdiction of the BLM. The remaining 2,000 feet is located on private property. The proposed R/W would authorize access to 100 acres of land owned by Mr. Crouse. He proposes to use the existing road in its current location. No improvements or new construction are proposed.

The road switches up the mountain with a gradient ranging from 5 to 10 degrees. The road bed material is composed primarily of gravel and rock of varying size. The surrounding ground is of the same material. The road is very stable as evidenced by the lack of erosion, heavy vegetation growth along the road, and the lack of any visible water on the road from underground seeps. There are no ditches along the road to handle water nor are there any water bars, culverts, etc. The soils on the hillside and on the road are very porous and water soaks in with little opportunity for runoff.

Mr. Crouse intends to maintain the road in the winter by using a snow plow attached to his four-wheel drive truck. The road will not require any maintenance in the summer.

- B. No Action Alternative:
The No Action Alternative is to deny the application.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT:

- A. General Setting:
The proposed R/W is located in a previously disturbed area on a west facing hillside in the Eagle River Valley. The ground surrounding the road is composed of gravel and rock. Heavy vegetation grows along the road and surrounding area that primarily consists of alder thickets, patches of cottonwood, and mixed birch/spruce forest.
- B. Land Status:
The subject land is State Mental Health selected. It is a 20 acre sliver of land within the Chugach State Park that is surrounded by privately owned property on the east, west and south boundaries. The north boundary is the park.
- C. Critical Elements of the Environment:
The following critical elements of the human environment are either not present or would not be affected by the Proposed Action or Alternative:
1. Air Quality
 2. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

3. Cultural Resources
4. Environmental Justice
5. Farm Lands (Prime or Unique)
6. Floodplains
7. Invasive, Non-native Species
8. Native American Religious Concerns
9. Subsistence
10. Threatened or Endangered Species
11. Wastes, Hazardous/Solid
12. Water Quality (Surface and Ground)
13. Wetlands/Riparian Zones
14. Wild and Scenic Rivers
15. Wilderness

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES:

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action will not generate any new environmental impacts on the subject land since the road is already present and no new construction or earthwork is proposed.

There is a visual impact. Although the road cannot be seen from the Eagle River Road, more than likely it can be seen from the Eagle River and the air.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

A No Action Alternative would likely cause Mr. Crouse to either use the road in trespass or to build a new road.

Using the road in trespass would not cause an environmental impact.

A new road would likely be steeper than the existing road. The impacts of a new road would include:

1. New earthwork
2. Habitat loss
3. Construction noise and dust
4. Another scar on the land
5. Reduced safety for users of the road due to an increased road grade

A new road would also impose an additional cost upon Mr. Crouse.

C. Mitigation Measures:

Mitigation measures are not necessary since the road is stable and not eroding.

D. Cumulative Impacts:

No cumulative impacts are expected by implementation of the Proposed Action. Visual impacts should not change in the future. Since only the Crouse family will be using the road, there will be minimum use.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION:

A. Agencies Consulted:

The following agencies have been contacted:

State of Alaska

Department of Natural Resources

Mental Health Trust Land Office

B. List of Preparers:

Shirley Rackley, Realty Specialist

David Kelley, Natural Resource Specialist

Donna Redding, Archaeologist

Jeff Denton, Subsistence Program Specialist

Bruce Seppi, Wildlife Biologist